



## ***The CAP Uniform***

This article will cover the proper wear of the Air Force style and CAP-distinctive uniforms, as well as grooming and weight standards for CAP members wearing the Air Force-style uniform combinations. The goal of this article is for each participant to know the proper wear and maintenance of Civil Air Patrol uniforms and insignia. Members will learn proper grooming standards and responsibilities for correcting deviations from standards. In addition, members will learn uniform requirements for the local unit and/or higher echelons.

As senior members we are role models to our cadets, as CAP members we are ambassadors of the Air Force in our communities. The way we present ourselves says a lot about the standards we set in accomplishing the CAP missions, so it's important that we set our standards high and meet them continually.

U.S. Air Force and CAP dress and grooming standards are a blend of tradition and practicality. The uniform draws attention to the individual, what is worn on the uniform represents the resume, if you will, of the member's service to the organization. The image you present to the people you meet will leave them with a lasting impression of you and CAP. When wearing the Air Force-style uniform, the image you present also reflects upon the entire U.S. Air Force.

### **GOALS FOR THIS MODULE:**

- 1 Explain why proper grooming and uniform wear are important to CAP.
- 2 Identify various uniform combinations permitted within Civil Air Patrol.
- 3 Give examples of when and when not to wear various Civil Air Patrol uniforms.
- 4 Demonstrate proper uniform wear for the local unit and/or wing.

### **Personal Grooming Standards When Wearing Air Force-Style Uniforms**

Members of CAP should be well-groomed and ensure that their personal appearance at all times reflects credit upon themselves and CAP. CAP Manual 39-1, *CAP Uniform Manual*, discusses weight standards (Attachment 1), grooming standards (Attachment 2) and all CAP uniform combinations available for wear.

Senior members who do not meet the standards for wear of the Air Force-style uniforms for reasons of grooming or fitness are not barred from membership and participation, but are barred from wearing Air Force-style uniforms. CAP has a variety of uniform combinations which senior members may wear.

**The visual image you present will leave a lasting impression on all who see you.**

*Weight Standards:* Weight standards for wear of CAP uniforms are in Attachment 1 of CAP Manual 39-1. Weight standards for CAP are calculated at the Air Force's maximum allowable weight for gender and height plus 10%.

*Hair Styles:* Overall, hair should be clean, well groomed, and neat. Avoid using an excessive amount of grooming aids. You may dye your hair if you wish, but it must look natural. Hair must not touch the eyebrows when groomed or protrude below the front band of properly worn head gear. EXCEPTION: hair may be visible in front of the women's flight cap.

- Men's hairstyles must have a tapered appearance on both sides and back, both with and without head gear. A tapered appearance dictates that the individual's hair will conform to the shape of the head, curving inward to the termination point. The bulk, or thickness, of hair must not exceed 1 ¼ inches, regardless of length. The bulk may not exceed ¼ inch at the termination point. The hair must not touch the ears and only the closely cut or shaved hair on the back of the neck may touch the collar.

- Women's hairstyles must present a professional appearance. The hair must not extend in length (on all sides) below an invisible line drawn parallel to the ground at the bottom edge of the shirt collar at the back of the neck. Hair must not exceed three inches in bulk or be styled in a way that prevents proper wear of headgear.

*Wigs and Hairpieces:* When worn must meet the standards of appearance as natural hair. If worn, they must be of good quality and fit.

*Mustaches:* When worn mustaches must not extend downward beyond the lip line of the upper lip or extend sideways beyond a vertical

line drawn upward from the corner of the mouth.

*Sideburns:* When worn, sideburns must be neatly trimmed and tapered in the same manner as the haircut. They must be straight and of even width (i.e., not flared). They must end in a clean-shaven horizontal line. Sideburns must not extend beyond the lowest part of the exterior ear opening.

*Beards:* Are not worn with Air Force-Style uniform combinations.

*Cosmetics/Nail Polish (women only):* Conservative and in good taste.

*Jewelry:*

- Watch: Will be conservative.

- Rings: A maximum of three.

- *Bracelet:* One bracelet may be worn if it is conservative, presents a proper military image, is no wider than 1 inch, and doesn't subject the wearer to potential injury. ID bracelets and medical alert bracelets are examples of acceptable pieces.

- *Earrings:* Women may wear small conservative diamond, gold, white pearl, or silver spherical pierced or clip earrings with all uniforms unless wear of the earrings would be unsafe. Only one earring per ear may be worn, and the earrings must be attached to the ear lobe.

- *Eyeglasses and other ornaments:* Conservative eyeglass frames may be worn as needed and when not prohibited by safety regulations. Ornaments on the head, visible ornaments around the neck, and ornamentation on eyeglass lenses or frames are prohibited while in uniform.

- *Religious apparel:* While in uniform, members may wear certain visible items of religious apparel. CAPM 39-1 defines religious apparel as “articles of clothing or dress which are part of the doctrine of traditional observance of the religious faith practiced by the member.” Hair and grooming practices are not included in the meaning of religious apparel. Jewelry of a religious nature must conform to standards set forth in this regulation for wear of non-religious jewelry. Religious head coverings are authorized only when military headgear is not authorized. Head coverings must be plain dark blue or black without adornment. Also, they may be worn underneath military headgear if they do not interfere with the proper fit or appearance of the headgear. For example, Jewish yarmulkes meet this requirement when they do not exceed 6 inches in diameter.

## Uniforms

Below are descriptions of, and basic wear guidelines for the most popular CAP uniforms. Detailed photos of these combinations are in your *Next Step* binder. [Neither this section nor the photos in your binder substitute for knowing the requirements for uniform wear found in CAP Manual 39-1.](#)

### ***Battle Dress Uniform***

This uniform is acceptable for missions, unit meetings, and unit activities. It is not appropriate when conducting office visits or appointments (with local officials, for example). Men and women wear the same type BDU.

*Headgear:* All personnel must wear the camouflage pattern BDU or unit authorized cap.

*Shirt:* Wear the shirt outside the trousers at all times. Sleeves may be rolled up. (You may not shorten the sleeves by cutting them.) If rolled up, sleeves will touch or come within 1 inch of the forearm when the arm is bent at a 90-degree angle. A brown or black t-shirt must be worn.

*Trousers:* Trousers must be bloused over the combat boots.

*Combat boots:* Combat boots are the only footwear authorized for wear with the BDU.

*Belt and buckle:* Dark blue, cotton or elastic with black metal subdued buckle and tip.

Center the “Civil Air Patrol” tape immediately above the left breast pocket. Center the “Name” tape immediately above the right breast pocket.

Center embroidered grade insignia on ultramarine blue background on both collars. Senior member NCOs and senior members without grade wear CAP cutouts on both sides of the collar.

*US Flag:* Must have reversed flag, with blue field facing forward, worn on the right shoulder, ½ inch below shoulder seam, centered on collar.

**Note:** Members who do not meet weight and grooming standards, or who do not choose to wear the BDU, may opt to wear the blue utility uniform. This uniform combination can be found in CAP Manual 39-1.

## ***Air Force Style Blue Uniform***

***Flight Cap:*** This hat is worn slightly to the wearer's right with the vertical crease of the cap in line with the center of the forehead, in a straight line with the nose. The bottom of the cap is approximately 1 inch from the eyebrows in the front. Women may have hair showing in front of the flight cap.

When not worn, the flight cap should be tucked under the belt on either side, between the first and second belt loops, provided it does not extend over the top of the belt.

***Men's Long and Short Sleeved Blue Shirt:*** Wear these shirts tucked into the service pants. Sleeves may not be rolled up. A white t-shirt must be worn (V-neck, U-neck or athletic style).

Rank insignia (mandatory): Officers will wear gray embroidered epaulets with rank insignia.

Gray Nametag (mandatory): Rests on but not over the top edge of the right pocket, centered between the edges of the pocket.

Badges and ribbons: Aviation badges are worn ½" above pocket or ribbons if worn; bottom row of ribbons must rest on, but not over top of pocket.

Tie (mandatory w/long sleeve): Tip of the tie will be no more than 1 ½ inches above or 1 ½ inches below the top of the belt buckle.

Tie tac/bar: It may be of the CAP crest, AF coat of arms, or the individual's grade insignia type. The tie tac/bar must be highly polished. Center the tie tac/bar between the bottom edge of the knot and the bottom tip of the tie.

***Women's Long and Short Sleeved Blue Shirt:*** These shirts come in two versions, the tuck-in

style and the semi-form fitting style. The tie tab is mandatory with the long sleeve shirt and optional with a short sleeve shirt.

Semi-Form Fitting shirt: This shirt can be worn tucked in or left out of either the service slacks or skirts. Place accouterments as indicated below.

Tuck-In Style shirt: This shirt must be tucked into the service slacks and skirts.

Rank insignia (mandatory): Officers will wear gray embroidered epaulets with rank insignia.

Gray Nametag (mandatory): Center on the right side between the buttons and the arm seam. Worn even with to 1 ½ inches higher or lower than the first exposed button and horizontal to the ground.

Badges and ribbons: Aviation badges, specialty insignia and specialty badges are worn ½ inch above the ribbons (only two badges may be worn in this position). Ribbons are worn centered on the left side, parallel to the ground. Align bottom row of ribbons with the name tag.

Tie Tab (mandatory w/long sleeve): Blue inverted V shape.

***Service Trousers/Slacks:*** Wear these dark blue pants with the bottom front resting on the front of the shoe/boot with a slight break in the crease. The back of the trousers' legs will be approximately 7/8 inch longer than the front. These may be worn with any of the service uniform combinations.

***Service Skirt (women only):*** You may find this dark blue skirt with or without belt loops. If the item has belt loops, the belt must be worn. The hem of the skirt may be no shorter than the top

of the kneecap and no longer than the bottom of the kneecap.

**Male Belt:** Blue woven 1 ¼ inch cotton web or 1 ¼ inch elastic, solid or woven belt with matching silver-color metal tip and buckle of chrome-like finish. Silver tip end of the belt extends beyond the buckle, facing the wearer's left (no blue fabric shows). **Female Belt:** Blue woven 1 inch cotton web or 1 inch elastic, solid or woven belt with matching silver-color metal tip and buckle of chrome-like finish. Silver tip end of the belt extends beyond the buckle facing the wearer's right.

**Footwear:** Your footwear should always be shined and in good repair.

With the service trousers/slacks, you may wear the low quarters (also known as oxfords), oxfords with low wedge heel, combat boots, or black dress boots. When the low quarters are worn, men must wear plain black socks. Women may wear plain black socks or hose (see below for description of hose allowed). With the boots, you have the option of wearing plain black or white socks.

Women may also choose to wear plain black pumps (high-heeled shoes) with the service slacks. The pumps must have no design. The heel must be of a height suitable to the individual, but no higher than 2 ½ inches. Platform shoes or extra thick soles aren't allowed. When the pumps are worn, women must wear hose. Hose will be neutral, dark brown, black, off black, or dark blue in a shade that complements the uniform and the individual's skin tone. No patterned hose will be worn.

With the service skirt, women may wear the low quarters, dress boots, or pumps. Regardless of the shoe chosen, women must wear hose with the skirt. (See previous paragraph for

restrictions on the pumps and hose. **Note:** It's much more professional looking to wear the pumps rather than the low quarter shoes with the skirt). Women may also opt to wear dress boots with the skirt, but these must be removed and oxfords or pumps worn in the member's work place. Boots may not have extra thick or platform soles. Heel height of the boot may not exceed 2 1/2 inches.

### ***CAP Distinctive Basic Uniform (White aviator shirt and Gray slacks/skirt)***

**Men's Long and Short Sleeve White Shirt with epaulets:** Wear these shirts tucked into the gray pants. Sleeves may not be rolled up.

Rank insignia (mandatory): Officers will wear gray embroidered epaulets with rank insignia.

Gray Nametag (mandatory): Rests on but not over the top edge of the right pocket, centered between the edges of the pocket.

Badges and ribbons: Aviation badges are worn ½ inch above pocket or ribbons if worn; bottom row of ribbons must rest on, but not over top of pocket. Only CAP ribbons may be worn.

Tie (mandatory w/long sleeve): Blue Air Force or CAP tie. Tip of the tie will be no more than 1 ½ inches above or 1 ½ inches below the top of the belt buckle.

Tie tac/bar: It may be of the CAP crest or the individual's grade insignia type. The tie tac/bar must be highly polished. Center the tie tac/bar between the bottom edge of the knot and the bottom tip of the tie.

Shoes: Any type of plain, black dress shoe is acceptable.

*Women's Long and Short Sleeved White Shirt with epaulets:* Wear shirts tucked into slacks or skirt.

Rank insignia (mandatory): Officers will wear gray embroidered epaulets with rank insignia.

Gray Nametag (mandatory): Rests on but not over the top edge of the right pocket, centered between the edges of the pocket.

Badges and ribbons: Aviation badges are worn ½ inch above pocket or ribbons if worn; bottom row of ribbons must rest on, but not over top of pocket. Only CAP ribbons may be worn.

Female floppy bow tie: required with long-sleeve aviator shirt.

*Slacks/skirt:* Any type medium gray dress slacks/skirt may be worn. (No jeans or cotton twill/casual slacks/skirts). Skirt length will be no longer than bottom of kneecap or shorter than top of kneecap. If a belt is worn, any type of black belt with conservative buckle is acceptable.

*Shoes:* Any type of plain, black dress shoe or pump is acceptable.

**Note:** Members who do not meet weight (but do meet grooming standards), or who do not choose to wear the CAP Distinctive Uniform (gray slacks/skirt), may opt to wear the new CAP Distinctive Uniform (blue slacks/skirt). This uniform combination can be found in CAP Manual 39-1 or corresponding policy letters.

***CAP Corporate Uniform (White aviator shirt and blue AF slacks/skirt)***

*Men's Long and Short Sleeve White Shirt with epaulets:* Wear these shirts tucked into the gray pants. Sleeves may not be rolled up.

Rank insignia (mandatory): Officers will wear blue embroidered epaulets with rank insignia.

Blue Two-Line Nametag (mandatory): Rests on but not over the top edge of the right pocket, centered between the edges of the pocket.

Badges and ribbons: Aviation badges are worn ½ inch above pocket or ribbons if worn; bottom row of ribbons must rest on, but not over top of pocket.

Tie (mandatory w/long sleeve): Blue AF tie. Tip of the tie will be no more than 1 ½ inches above or 1 ½ inches below the top of the belt buckle.

Tie tac/bar: It may be of the CAP crest or the individual's grade insignia type. The tie tac/bar must be highly polished. Center the tie tac/bar between the bottom edge of the knot and the bottom tip of the tie.

*Women's Long and Short Sleeved White Shirt with epaulets:* Wear shirts tucked into slacks or skirt.

Rank insignia (mandatory): Officers will wear blue embroidered epaulets with rank insignia.

Blue Two-Line Nametag (mandatory): Rests on but not over the top edge of the right pocket, centered between the edges of the pocket

Badges and ribbons: Aviation badges are worn ½ inch above pocket or ribbons if worn; bottom row of ribbons must rest on, but not over top of pocket.

Female tie: required with long-sleeve aviator shirt.

*Service Trousers/Slacks:* Wear these AF dark blue pants with the bottom front resting on the front of the shoe/boot with a slight break in the crease. The back of the trousers' legs will be approximately 7/8 inch longer than the front. These may be worn with any of the service uniform combinations.

*Service Skirt (women only):* You may find this AF dark blue skirt with or without belt loops. If the item has belt loops, the belt must be worn. The hem of the skirt may be no shorter than the top of the kneecap and no longer than the bottom of the kneecap.

*Belt: Male:* Blue woven 1 ¼ inch cotton web or 1 ¼ inch elastic, solid or woven belt with matching silver-color metal tip and buckle of chrome-like finish. Silver tip end of the belt extends beyond the buckle, facing the wearer's left (no blue fabric shows). *Female:* Blue woven 1-inch cotton web or 1-inch elastic, solid or woven belt with matching silver-color metal tip and buckle of chrome-like finish. Silver tip end of the belt extends beyond the buckle facing the wearer's right.

*Footwear:* Your footwear should always be shined and in good repair.

With the service trousers/slacks, you may wear the low quarters (also known as oxfords), oxfords with low wedge heel, combat boots, or black dress boots. When the low quarters are worn, men must wear plain black socks. Women may wear plain black socks or hose (see below for description of hose allowed). With the

boots, you have the option of wearing plain black or white socks.

Women may also choose to wear plain black pumps (high-heeled shoes) with the service slacks. The pumps must have no design. The heel must be of a height suitable to the individual, but no higher than 2 ½ inches. Platform shoes or extra thick soles aren't allowed. When the pumps are worn, women must wear hose. Hose will be neutral, dark brown, black, off black, or dark blue in a shade that complements the uniform and the individual's skin tone. No patterned hose will be worn.

With the service skirt, women may wear the low quarters, dress boots, or pumps. Regardless of the shoe chosen, women must wear hose with the skirt. (See previous paragraph for restrictions on the pumps and hose. **Note:** It's much more professional looking to wear the pumps rather than the low quarters with the skirt). Women may also opt to wear dress boots with the skirt, but these must be removed and oxfords or pumps worn in the member's work place. Boots may not have extra thick or platform soles. Heel height of the boot may not exceed 2 1/2 inches.

## **Wear of CAP Uniforms**

The CAP uniform may be worn when engaged in normal duties as a CAP member. With certain restrictions uniforms may be worn on commercial or military flights or when visiting military installations. The service or dress uniform is appropriate for social activities on military installations or when attending functions of a military nature when representing CAP.

The CAP uniform should **not** be worn more than one hour after the close of activities, or

when participating in a public demonstration not approved by the Air Force. The uniform must **not** be worn when engaged in private employment or when sponsoring or advertising a commercial interest. The uniform must **not** be worn to any meeting or demonstration of a group which advocates illegal acts or violence against the government or other groups. The CAP uniform will **not** be worn in foreign countries except when participating in official exchange programs or other international events.

## Conclusion

The image you present to the people you meet will leave a lasting impression about you and the Civil Air Patrol. Take the time to know and wear your choice of uniform properly and proudly.

Reference:  
CAPM 39-1 – *CAP Uniform Manual*